

Clearing up Lincoln-head inquiries

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers questions about a popular collectible: the Lincoln-head cent.

Q—How much money would I get for the old pennies in my piggy bank? All have dates in the 1950s and are worn from use. Also, why are such coins called "wheat cents"?

J.K., Wilmette

A—Most dealers would pay less than two cents each. Specimens with "S" mint marks below the years bring slightly higher prices.

However, be sure to check each coin before you sell. An error strike—the 1955 with doubled lettering on the "heads side"—normally wholesales for at least \$200.

Lincoln cents issued between 1909 and 1958 are dubbed "wheaties" because they depict two stylized wheat stalks on the reverse.

Q—Are my 1974 Lincoln-Kennedy pennies worth anything?

S.I., Wheaton

A—Businessmen out to make a profit engrave patriotic designs [a bust of Kennedy or an outline of the Liberty Bell] onto Lincoln cents and sell them as souvenirs. They have no special value on the hobby market.

Q—We can't find [pre-1959] "wheat cents" in our change. Are there any collectible Lincolns made in past 25 years still in circulation?

O.K., Chicago

A—A 1972 cent with doubled lettering on the "heads side" retails for at least \$120 and a 1983 Lincoln with doubling on the "tails side" usually goes for \$100 or more.

But don't get your hopes up. You probably have a better chance of winning the lottery than finding either coin in your pocket.

● At least 30 coin dealers will sell their wares today at the Will County Coin Club's annual show. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn near the intersection of Interstate 80 and Larkin Avenue in Joliet. Club members will conduct a 300-lot coin auction beginning at 3 p.m.; admission is free.